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THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL WOMAN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION

BY LILLIAN M. N. STEVENS,
President.

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union is an organization of Christian women banded together for the protection of the home, the abolition of the liquor traffic and the triumph of Christ's Golden Rule in custom and law. It is the lineal descendant of the Woman's Temperance Crusade of 1873, and is now the largest organization of women in the world.

In 1873 the women of the crusade gathered in the streets to pray and to beseech saloon keepers to give up their business, and in two months, in upwards of 250 towns, the liquor traffic ceased to exist. Ohio was the crusade state. Prominent among the old crusaders were Mrs. Elizabeth J. Thompson, Hillsboro; Mother Stewart, Springfield; Mrs. George W. Carpenter, Washington Court House.

As an outgrowth of the crusade the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union was formed in Cleveland, O., in 1874. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union is now organized in every state and territory, the District of Columbia, and in more than 10,000 different localities. It is distinctively a total abstinence society, and it is not only anti-saloon but anti-distillery and anti-brewery. Its breadth is indicated by its motto, "For God and home and native land." Its badge is a small bow of white ribbon and its declaration of principles is as follows:

We believe in the coming of His Kingdom, whose service is perfect freedom, because His laws, written in our members as well as in nature and in grace, are perfect, converting the soul.

We believe in the gospel of the Golden Rule, and that each man's habits of life should be an example safe and beneficent for every other man to follow.

We believe that God created both man and woman in His own image, and therefore we believe in one standard of purity for both men and women, and in the equal right of all to hold opinions and to express the same with equal freedom.

We believe in a living wage; in an eight-hour day; in courts of conciliation and arbitration; in justice as opposed to greed of gain; in "peace on earth and good-will to men."

We therefore formulate, and for ourselves adopt the following pledge, asking our sisters and brothers of a common danger and a common hope, to make common cause with us, in working its reasonable and helpful precepts into the practice of everyday life.

I hereby solemnly promise, God helping me, to abstain from all distilled, fermented and malt liquors, including wine, beer and cider¹ and to employ all proper means to discourage the use of and traffic in the same.

To confirm and enforce the rationale of this pledge we declare our purpose to educate the young; to form a better public sentiment; to reform, so far as possible, by religious, ethical and scientific means, the drinking classes; to seek the transforming power of divine grace for ourselves and all for whom we work, that they and we may wilfully transcend no law of pure and wholesome living; and finally we pledge ourselves to labor and to pray that all these principles, founded upon the Gospel of Christ, may be worked out into the customs of society and the laws of the land.

The 10,000 local unions composing the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union have been the chief factors in state campaigns for statutory prohibition and constitutional amendments, and for securing the enactment of other reform laws, especially those for the protection of girls. It began the movement for scientific temperance education in the public schools, having been instrumental in securing laws to that end in all the states, and besides this it has secured congressional legislation, by means of which all the territories and the District of Columbia are brought under the same beneficent statutes.

The work of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union for peace and arbitration, for the children in Sunday schools, loyal temperance legions and kindergartens; its efforts to influence college students and to train and organize young women for a philanthropic life; its evangelistic work for non-churchgoers, railway employees, soldiers, lumbermen, miners, and especially for the drinking men of all classes, have proved its comprehensiveness and the tirelessness of its energy. Its efforts to reach the pauper and the prisoner, to establish reformatories and homes for the wretched victims of inebriety and their suffering children, and its temperance flower mission, must appeal to every heart.

¹State and local constitutions can include the words "as a beverage," if desired.

It also strives to redeem outcast women from a slavery worse than that of chains, and by better laws to secure protection to women and girls from the outrages of brutal and designing men. It has been active in raising the age of consent in nearly every state in the Union, and its influence is being strongly felt in the purification of our literature and art.

The National Woman's Christian Temperance Union Convention is held annually in some large city. The convention of 1907 was held in Nashville, Tenn., in November. Some of the most important features of the convention were enthusiasm over the frequent announcement of recent prohibition victories, immense evening audiences, gifts and pledges at one of the evening meetings amounting to about \$7,000, the presence of Confederate veterans on the platform at demonstration night, the speech of General A. S. Daggett on the army canteen, the enthusiasm created for Y. and L. T. L. work, the large number of life and memorial members received, the welcome to the new prohibition states, Oklahoma and Georgia, and the jubilee over what white ribboners and L. T. L.'s did "to cause to come to pass."

Some of the leading efforts at the present time are to retain the "anti-canteen" law, to secure the passage of the Littlefield or Bacon bill, to banish the sale of liquor from all government buildings, to secure state laws forbidding the sale of liquor within three or four miles of soldiers' homes, forts, army camps, etc., to interest all teachers and pupils, especially in normal schools and colleges, in scientific temperance instruction, to secure at least \$2.00 from every local union, or its equivalent, from the state, for the Frances E. Willard Memorial Fund, to complete the raising of \$10,000 for an emergency fund, to increase total abstinence practice and sentiment and to promote the prohibition of the liquor traffic everywhere.

The World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union was organized in 1883. It exists in fifty-two nations with a membership of more than half a million. Frances E. Willard, its founder, and the first eight "around-the-world" missionaries, were instrumental in its establishment. The officers of the World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union at the present time are: The Countess of Carlisle, president; Mrs. L. M. N. Stevens, vice-president-at-large; Miss Agnes E. Slack and Miss Anna A. Gordon, honorary secretaries; Mrs. Mary E. Sanderson, honorary treasurer. The officers

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of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union at the present time are: Mrs. Lillian M. N. Stevens, president; Miss Anna A. Gordon, vice-president-at-large; Mrs. Susanna M. D. Fry, corresponding secretary; Mrs. Elizabeth Preston Anderson, recording secretary; Mrs. Sara H. Hoge, assistant recording secretary; Mrs. Susanna M. D. Fry, acting treasurer.

The basic principles of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union are total abstinence and prohibition. Prohibition is the logical associate of total abstinence, and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union believes that the temperance reform, in order to go steadily and successfully forward must use as propelling forces both these oars. The National Woman's Christian Temperance Union teaches that alcohol is a poison; that its use breaks down the physical nature and harmfully affects the blood, the nerves, the heart, and makes the drinker an easy prey to disease. It also teaches that alcohol attacks the moral nature, and its use causes an increased need of institutions for the dependent, the delinquent and the criminal classes.

It is estimated that at least 600,000 business and public Woman's Christian Temperance Union meetings are held in the United States each year. The teaching and preaching at these meetings are along the lines of prevention, education, reformation and legislation. This society secures more petitions than any other in the world. It is estimated that not fewer than 20,000,000 signatures and attestations have been secured by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, including the polyglot petition, addressed to the different governments of the world, asking them to do away with the manufacture of and traffic in alcoholic liquors, opium and the legalization of impurity. This petition has been presented to the President of the United States, to Queen Victoria, and the Governor-General of Canada.

The National Woman's Christian Temperance Union keeps a superintendent of legislation in Washington during the entire session of Congress, to look after reform bills. It also maintains a Woman's Christian Temperance Union missionary at Ellis Island, to meet the incoming foreigners. Fully 250,000 children are taught in the Loyal Temperance Legion the reasons for total abstinence and are trained as temperance workers. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union has created a great literature. Each of the

forty superintendents of departments sends out large amounts, and the several states distribute millions of pages annually.

The "Union Signal," the official organ of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union, is owned and published by the society. It is a sixteen-page weekly and has an extensive circulation in every state and territory and in foreign lands. The "Crusader Monthly" is the official organ of the Loyal Temperance Legion. It is a sixteen-page monthly, having a large and constantly increasing circulation. Forty-three state organizations publish papers devoted entirely to Woman's Christian Temperance Union interests.

The part the Woman's Christian Temperance Union has taken in the recent campaigns which have brought state-wide prohibition to Georgia, Oklahoma, Mississippi, North Carolina, Alabama and Arkansas is well described editorially in the "Oklahoma State Capital:"

The women organized for prohibition.

Prohibition was their soul's desire.

They cared not for the political features so long as they in no way interfered with their fight for the prohibitory clause.

Even those who were opposed to the prohibitory measure must view with admiration, and applause even, the steadfastness, vigor, and ability with which the fight was carried on by the women.

The organization formed working committees all over the state, and the marching of the children with banners through the streets of the towns and cities had a telling influence.

After all, men must admit that the women wield a mighty influence in the politics of State and nation.

A gifted Georgian has said, when speaking of the great work of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in so many different lines, that after all the most potent is "the tender mother in the quiet seclusion of her home as she gathers her children about her and kneels in humble prayer to the all-wise Father."

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was never so strong numerically and in other ways as at the present time. The indications are that it will go on and on with its God-given work until the victory is complete; and it is to be completed! The day of national prohibition "is nearer than when the Woman's Christian Temperance Union first believed."